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Letter dated 29 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the report of the International Expert Consultation on "Shaping the Programme of Work for the United Nations Forum on Forests", held at Bonn, Germany, from 27 November to 1 December 2000. We would be most grateful if the document could be introduced as an official document and be distributed during the first session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (12 February 2001) in order to facilitate the work of that body (see annex).

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Eight-Country Initiative

Shaping the Programme of Work for the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

International Expert Consultation
27 November – 1 December 2000
Bonn / Germany

Report of the Expert Consultation

The report of the expert consultation is not a consensus document, but aims to reflect different views and the broad range of ideas of participants.

December 2000

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In February 2000, the Ad-Hoc Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) concluded its deliberations and issued its final report. The IFF recommended that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) should endorse the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and invited executive heads of relevant international and regional organisations, institutions and instruments to form a Collaborative Partnership on Forests to support UNFF. The CSD adopted the report of the IFF and called upon ECOSOC to decide upon the establishment of "an intergovernmental body called the United Nations Forum on Forests". On October 18, 2000, the ECOSOC adopted the resolution E/2000/L.32* to establish the UNFF as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC.

The objective of the international arrangement on forests is "to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end." The arrangement should "provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development" and promote the implementation of forest-related decisions of the international forest regime. In carrying out principal functions of the arrangement, the work should be based on the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

The ECOSOC resolution E/2000/L.32* instructs the UNFF to establish a multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), drawing on the elements reflected in the aforementioned UNCED decisions and the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. It is envisaged that the UNFF should adopt its programme of work at its first substantive session and develop a plan of action for the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

1.2 The Eight-Country Initiative

The government-led initiative: "Shaping the Programme of Work for the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)" was formed and steered by eight countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria and Germany. It was launched in September 2000 and is known as the Eight-Country Initiative. The Initiative worked in close collaboration

with the existing IFF Secretariat, international organisations and secretariats of global instruments which formed the high-level Informal Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF).

The Eight-Country Initiative aimed to assist the international community in developing the concept and basic elements of the programme of work for the UNFF. Through this report the Initiative will provide contributions to the IFF Secretariat in preparing a Secretary General's Report for consideration at the UNFF's first session.

This government-led initiative was open to all interested countries, as well as to forest-related international organisations and global instruments, the NGO community and representatives of the private sector as well as major groups. The initiative was conducted in a transparent manner. Building on the consensus reached at IFF 4 in February 2000, the Initiative took into full consideration the objectives, principal functions, structure, working modalities and institutional setting as laid down in the ECOSOC resolution. For the conduct of the Initiative, the eight countries had formed a Steering Committee that coordinated all communication with interested parties, including publications and other documents as well as the organisation of meetings.

A questionnaire – endorsed by the Initiative - was distributed to all interested parties with the aim of facilitating the exchange of information and views on the future concept and elements of the UNFF programme of work. The responses to the questionnaire were incorporated into a Synthesis Report which was based entirely on the contributions from countries, the NGO community, the private sector, international organisations and major groups. The Synthesis Report is not a consensus document, but strives to reflect the richness of opinions expressed, and sometimes divergent views.

1.3 The International Expert Consultation

In addition to existing documents, the Synthesis Report served as a background material for the International Expert Consultation, held in Bonn, Germany from 27 November to 1 December 2000. The expert consultation was an informal forum at the expert level to exchange views and information among participants in their personal capacity. The Consultation was attended by 95 experts coming from 33 countries, as well as from

international organisations, NGOs and the private sector. It brought forward views and elaborated upon ideas regarding the concept and basic elements of the MYPOW, in line with the practices usually adopted by the government-led initiatives during the IPF/IFF process.

The expert consultation focused on the functions of the UNFF as outlined in ECOSOC resolution in para 2 (a-f). The discussions included:

- the relationship of the MYPOW to specific functions suggesting main activities
- the means to be used (inter-governmental dialogue, multi-stakeholder dialogue, expert groups, government-led initiatives, informal consultations, workshops, etc.), and the
- outcomes, which derive from the UNFF MYPOW (action programmes, reports, studies, recommendations, proposals for action).

The discussions were carried out with reminders about the boundaries of the ECOSOC resolution but were not limited by that. There was no specific discussion on the institutional structure of the UNFF, but structural aspects were an integral part of the discussion on performing the functions of the UNFF. The expert consultation worked through plenary sessions and four working groups. All working groups addressed the same functions at the same time and reported back to plenary on the same topics. The present report provides only a summary of the group work results. Full text of the group work reports will be published in separate proceedings of the expert consultation.

During the meeting participants received information on two forest related initiatives. Australia presented a summary of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and a presentation was made about the work of the Global Fire Monitoring Centre. In addition, an assessment of the linkages between the work of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action was presented.

The report of the expert consultation is not a consensus document, but aims to reflect different views and the broad range of ideas of participants. The report will be forwarded to the UN Secretary General's Office in order to become a background document for the organisational meeting of the UNFF on February 12, 2001, available for the informal negotiations thereafter and the first substantive meeting of UNFF in June 2001.

The participants of the meeting expressed their gratitude to the Federal Government of Germany for hosting this initiative and for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

2 RESULTS OF THE EXPERT CONSULTATION

2.1 Context of the UNFF and its MYPOW

The ECOSOC resolution defines the following functions to the UNFF[1]: (a) "facilitate and promote the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Proposals for Action as well as other actions which may be agreed upon...", (b) "provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue...", (c) "enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues...", (d) "foster international cooperation...", (e) "monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels...", and (f) "strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests...".

Based on the ECOSOC resolution, most participants of the expert consultation emphasised a central role of the UNFF in relation to other international forest-related instruments and organisations. Some participants emphasised that UNFF should play a complementary role vis-a-vis existing instruments and organisations and avoid duplication. The expert consultation discussed the nature of UNFF, emphasising its coordinating and facilitating role. There was a strong view that UNFF provides an opportunity for a shift from dialogue to action wherein implementation of previously agreed measures including the IPF/IFF proposal for action will be a priority. In the discussions the participants were aware of the limitations of UNFF. However, UNFF was considered by some as the focal point and the caretaker for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and as the UN lead body at the global level firmly based on SFM in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner. Many experts also stressed that the coordinating mandate of the UNFF should lead to facilitation of measures to achieve SFM.

With regard to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), it was underlined that the heads of relevant organisations were invited to form this partnership in order to support the

[1] See the Economic and Social Council Resolution E/2000/L.32* for the full text.

work of UNFF. The ECOSOC resolution outlines in para 8 that the CPF would receive guidance from UNFF. In view of the mandate of UNFF, participants interpreted "to guide" as, for examp'e, to encourage, invite, initiate, advise, and promote. In general the informal nature of the CPF was acknowledged and the independence of the CPF member organisations was considered.

The multi-year programme of work of the UNFF will draw elements from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Forest Principles, chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. Many experts proposed that the functions as outlined in the ECOSOC resolution should form the basic framework of the MYPOW. In particular, it was unanimously agreed that the MYPOW should contain an action-oriented approach and should focus on implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and other actions.

2.2 The Potential Means Available for the UNFF

The UNFF is an intergovernmental body and has a compact secretariat for its support. In terms of the potential means available for the UNFF, the experts discussed examples including:

Within UNFF meetings

- High level segment
- Regional break-out sessions during UNFF meetings
- Donor meetings as side events of UNFF meetings.

Other meetings

- Inter-sessional meetings
- Regional and international meetings
- Workshops

Others

- Expert groups, working groups and task forces
- Country-led initiatives
- Case studies ("success stories")

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Provision of information, guidance and clearing house mechanism
- Internet-based information exchange; discussion fora; UNFF chat room, etc.
- CPF and other partnerships
- Memoranda of Understanding with relevant organisations and instruments
- Newsletters, circulars
- Incentives.

2.3 Expected Outcomes of the UNFF MYPOW

The means described above are intended to facilitate and promote implementation and foster the dialogue within UNFF and provide information as well as advice to countries and parties involved in forest related issues through recommendations, resolutions, reports and assessments. The outcomes described below of UNFF are guides for SFM policy at the national level as well as for the work of the CPF and others in support of national action. The types of expected outcomes discussed included:

- Common understanding of SFM (concept, terms, definition)
- Action-orientated guidance for the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action
- Agreed definitions disseminated
- Agreed text for policy guidance to international and national levels
- Structured policy guidance and recommendations to CPF for harmonised actions
- UNFF decisions on specific themes such as public private partnerships for SFM, technology transfer and others
- Draft resolutions formulated for ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly
- Guidelines, norms, criteria and principles
- Harmonised multi-lateral and bilateral work programmes
- Guidelines for implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.
- New actions catalysed at the country level
- Learning spread between countries
- Establishment of financial mechanisms for the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals of Action.

2.4 UNFF Functions and the Multi Year Programme of Work

2.4.1 Function (a) Implementation

"Facilitate and promote the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Proposals for Action as well as other actions which may be agreed upon, including through national forest programmes and other integrated programmes relevant to forests; catalyse, mobilize and generate financial resources; and mobilize and channel technical and scientific resources to this end, including by taking steps towards the broadening and development of mechanisms and/or further initiatives to enhance international cooperation;" (ECOSOC Resolution)

The expert consultation emphasised the importance of focusing on implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. A major tool for implementation at national level are the national forest programmes (nfp) as identified in the IPF. The definition of nfp's should be considered. The participants recommended that the UNFF would facilitate and promote the formulation and implementation of nfp's as well as other forest policy processes. An important step in the nfp process is the national level interpretation and prioritisation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. The need to remove impediments for successful implementation of nfps was underlined. In this regard the collaboration with CPF was emphasised.

Among the participants there was a lack of clarity on the relationship between the MYPOW and the plan of action. Among the participants there were also those who considered that the UNFF plan of action will focus on facilitating the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action through nfps at country level, and to remove the related impediments. The plan of action should have clear objectives and strategies on (i) intergovernmental work, (ii) facilitation of implementation at national level as well as strategic targets and compliance with forest-related policies, and (iii) financial provisions.

The Plan of Action was seen by some members of the expert consultation as necessary to achieve an increased level of implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action at national level. Although the Plan of Action was considered essentially an UNFF instrument, its implementation would principally take place at national level through national institutions and

processes, supported by CPF institutions and respective instruments such as GEF and bi-lateral arrangements.

Some experts underlined that the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action requires an effective monitoring, assessment and reporting system (see Function (e) on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting). Some participants of the expert consultation emphasised the possible role of the CPF member institutions in designing, coordinating and implementing the system, jointly with the countries.

Based on the ECOSOC resolution, the areas of priority on financing SFM and transfer of technology were underlined (see Function (d) International Cooperation).

The majority of the participants stressed that UNFF should give special attention to bottom-up action and participatory approach at all levels including in the development and implementation of nfps. In addition, UNFF can make an assessment of the restrictions and hindrances for the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. A communication strategy was proposed for provision and exchange of information and experiences on SFM.

The expert consultation discussed the need for operational guidance for implementation at country level. Some experts proposed the preparation of guidelines for the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, whereas others were of the opinion that adequate guidelines already exist e.g. in the form of the Practitioners' Guide for the Implementation of the IPF Proposals of Action, and nfp guidelines which should possibly be revised.

Some participants noted the useful contribution towards implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action that could be made by simplified summaries of the Proposals for Action.

2.4.2 Function (b) Providing a Forum

"*Provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue among Governments, which would involve international organizations and other interested parties, including major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;*" (ECOSOC Resolution)

It was recommended that the UNFF as a forum for continued policy development and dialogue would focus on fostering common understanding on SFM, with special emphasis on defining its contents and key concepts. Some participants included in this also the compatibility of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and forest certification; some viewed this as a controversial issue. It was stated that policy development and dialogue should be orientated to support countries to deal with limitation and obstacles on implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and to enhance, share and take advantage of successful experiences.

Many experts expressed the view that the common understanding of SFM should be supported by improved communication and information exchange, including the dissemination of lessons learned at national level on nfp experiences. The sharing of country–level experiences in the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and other international forest-related decisions should also be facilitated. Some participants suggested that the content of the existing agreements regarding SFM and the results of IPF / IFF should be communicated to decision makers and public at large in a language which is understandable and relevant to them.

Many participants recommended that an approach should be designed to identify priorities for policy development and dialogue. The identification of priority issues should draw on the analysis of country reporting (see Function (e) Monitoring and Assessment) with special reference to the demonstrated obstacles and successes in implementation.

Some participants proposed that a limited number (1 – 3) priority issues or themes would be identified for each UNFF session, at the same time leaving sufficient opportunity to discuss overarching policies, concepts and strategies. Others proposed that the technology transfer, trade and finance are treated as cross-cutting issues during all sessions of UNFF. It was also stressed that the UNFF should have a certain degree of flexibility to respond to changing priorities arising from current developments.

Most participants called for discussions on selected thematic issues or areas of priorities to be identified by UNFF, which might include:

- technology transfer
- financing of SFM
- major group participation
- forest biodiversity conservation
- forestry in poverty alleviation
- production of forest products
- forest health
- supply and demand of forest products
- national forest policies
- external factors
- science and information
- forest fires
- valuation
- illegal logging
- underlying causes
- trade
- disaster prevention
- matters left pending from IPF/IFF.

Most participants of the expert consultation strongly emphasised the importance of the high-level ministerial segment which is expected to provide for increased political awareness and support the work of the UNFF as a process for political endorsement by national leaders. The use of the high-level segment in promoting cross-sectoral coordination of policy areas which impact the SFM was proposed. There is expectation that the ministerial segment will attract national and international attention to forests thus supporting implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. It could also facilitate the work of the CPF through interaction with the heads of organisations and the governing bodies.

It was emphasised by some that the UNFF member states should prepare the political agenda of the high-level ministerial segment at the national level through inter-ministerial meetings. The involvement of all major groups in the preparation of the high-level ministerial segment could enhance proactive and positive political dialogue at national level.

Recognising that the participation will follow the rules in the ECOSOC resolution as well as the rules and procedures of a functional commission of the UN, some participants emphasised the importance of involving all relevant organisations, private sector, NGOs, IPOs and other members of major groups in the policy development and dialogue.

Some of the specific expected outcomes which were proposed during the expert consultation for this function include:

- Strengthened agreed political commitments that can be brought to national level to facilitate implementation
- Common understanding of SFM (concepts, terms and definitions)
- Declarations on priority issues by the high-level segment
- Political endorsement of other UNFF outcomes by the high-level segment.

2.4.3 Function (c) Cooperation and Policy/Programme Coordination

"*Enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;*" (ECOSOC Resolution)

The majority of the participants of the expert consultation endorsed the importance of enhancing cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination for facilitating the implementation of existing commitments (see function (a) Implementation) and for increasing the efficiency of the international arrangement on forests.

The expert consultation underlined that an effective inter-action between UNFF and institutions that form the CPF will contribute to successful fulfilment of this function. Some recommended that a clear mission statement, modalities and strategy for the CPF need to be agreed jointly among the UNFF and the executives of the CPF institutions.

Some participants stressed the need for joint programming among CPF participating institutions thereby focusing their activities and programmes to be consistent with policies, strategies and activities promoted by the UNFF, especially in implementation of the IPF/IFF

Proposals for Action. The joint programming should be based on identification of priority issues most in need of synergy and joint action.

Participants noted the specific recommendations in the ECOSOC Resolution with respect to the CPF. Many participants stressed that the CPF be modelled with limited membership along the lines of ITFF, which worked well. Some participants suggested that the CPF should accommodate a wider participation and become more open, with special reference to networking and / or open-ended consultative process with NGOs and major groups, private sector, regional processes and civil society.

Many participants emphasised the need to assess the current situation regarding cooperation and policy and programme coordination among relevant international and regional organisations, institutions and instruments, and the importance of identifying areas requiring improved coordination in policies and programmes affecting implementation. The assessment could draw on and update earlier analysis made under IPF/IFF. The stock-taking could be followed by an analysis of gaps as well as areas of common interest, overlap and duplication in policies and programmes. The results of this analysis would need to be linked with the outcomes of the reporting and monitoring system on national implementation, inter alia to provide guidance to the CPF.

The regional and national element in cooperation and policy and programme coordination was emphasised (see also Function (b)). In elaboration, some experts recommended building on the existing regional processes and experiences, such as inter alia those in Europe, Amazonian countries, Central America, Central Africa, and SADC.

Many participants also encouraged to draw on active inputs and experiences from other sectors and non-forest sector organisations, institutions and instruments with special reference to agriculture, energy, transport, education and health.

The need to enhance the involvement of local levels and to bridge the gap between the international fora and local groups was also emphasised by several experts. In this respect, an effective communication strategy should be developed (see also function (b)).

The potential means through which the UNFF could perform this function were discussed, including:

- Task group / task force
- Full open plenary at UNFF1 with all CPF representatives examining goals, ideas and proposals with invited position papers
- CPF reports to UNFF at each UNFF session detailing their policies and programmes relevant to the work of the UNFF
- Joint meetings with relevant regional organisations
- Secretariats of relevant conventions
- Permanent contacts with COPs.

The possible outcomes of the UNFF MYPOW under this function could include:

- An inventory of relevant international instruments, organisations and programmes, indicating relevance to the UNFF and its MYPOW
- CPF special inputs and position papers
- CPF and national reports
- CPF strategy with (i) mission statement, (ii) modalities, (iii) implementation strategies
- Improved coordination and communication between international organisations and groups, including means to install knowledge of SFM in trade-related fora such as WTO
- MoUs between CPF member institutions and other relevant institutions and instruments.

2.4.4 Function (d) International Cooperation

"*Foster international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;*" (ECOSOC Resolution)

Most participants of the expert consultation underlined the importance of financing, partnerships, technology transfer, capacity building, policy development and trade for the successful performance of this function. Another emphasis was on the potential for SFM to be financially self-sustaining in the long run, recognising the need for bridge financing in the interim. International cooperation should focus on the implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals

for Action. In this context the expert consultation also stressed that nfps can be used as policy tools to facilitate international cooperation at country level.

Regarding financing, some experts proposed to build on the ongoing work and processes, such as the Pretoria (1996), Croydon (1999), Oslo (2001) meetings, and the World Bank Forest Policy Implementation Review and Strategy development. Some participants proposed to undertake mapping and description of success stories in SFM financing. The study could lead to developing innovative proposals for effective and efficient financing mechanisms and transparent management of funds, and gradual streamlining of financing mechanisms for SFM. The UNFF could also identify obstacles / barriers to effective funding for SFM and the nfps. It was suggested by some that there is a need to identify and establish collaborative financial and technical partnerships for the implementation of forest management, with special reference to support transition to SFM. Some participants also called for direct funding for local SFM initiatives. It was recommended that national financing strategies be made an instrument of national forest programmes.

Some participants recommended the establishment of an International Forest Fund under the auspices of the UNFF. Others favoured other types of partnerships for managing and channelling funds, including an investment promotion entity as well as a clearing house mechanism for technology transfer. Proposals included the suggestion for a window for SFM in the GEF. It was argued by some that there is a need to explore lessons learned and develop effective new collaborative partnerships between private sector, donors, governments and civil society. The move towards programme approaches was supported, as well as country-led in-country coordination of donor assistance.

The need to harmonise donor approaches and ensure more even distribution of donor assistance to developing countries was also noted by some experts. It was suggested that UNFF should provide information on both, donor policies and procedures as well as country needs for assistance.

Regarding technology transfer, some participants proposed to establish regional UNFF networks among countries, CPF and other organisations and stakeholders. The importance of capacity building as an element of international cooperation was also recognised.

Many participants recommended that the trade issues must be dealt with by the UNFF in a focussed way as they relate to implementation and transition to SFM, and called for actions enhancing the international competitiveness of forest products and services to facilitate the transition towards self-financing SFM.

The potential means through which the UNFF could perform this function were discussed, including:

- Regional UNFF sessions to exchange views and experiences to include consideration of links between the forest sector and other sectors such as agriculture, mining, transport etc.
- UNFF meetings in different regions associated with other related international meetings such as FAO-COFO
- Guidance to CPF as to address emerging priorities regarding international cooperation and impediments to implementation
- Provision of financial resources.

The possible outcomes of the UNFF MYPOW under this function could include:

- Action programmes
- Regional guidelines
- Joint activities and innovative partnerships
- Reports and publications on financing mechanisms and instruments, technology transfer and demand and supply of assistance
- Strategic approach and code of conduct for donor parties
- Clearing house mechanism
- Increased forestry investment, e.g. by an investment promotion entity
- MoU between multilaterals on joint action.

2.4.5 Function (e) Monitoring and Assessment

"*Monitor and assess progress at national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed;*" (ECOSOC Resolution)

The expert consultation agreed that the outcomes of this function were crucial for effective implementation (function (a)), and the successful performance of all the other functions of the UNFF. During the expert consultation the cross cutting role of the monitoring and assessment function was emphasised and respective reporting by governments as well as regional and international organisations, institutions and instruments was suggested.

Some experts were of the opinion that the system should bring together and harmonise already existing elements such as the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, IUCN protected areas monitoring system, and the Global Information Service currently developed by IUFRO and be linked to reporting systems of other forest related instruments. The reporting and monitoring system should also meet the needs for generating lessons learned and exchange of experience. A specific communication strategy was proposed to be set up in this regard. The reporting and monitoring system could form a part of the Plan of Action.

Some participants proposed that monitoring and assessment could draw on and work closely with existing monitoring and information systems as sources of information to avoid creating another UN reporting and monitoring system that would be costly, time consuming, duplicating efforts, and increasing the burden on the governments and agencies dealing with forest issues. This approach favoured the identification of gaps and problems in the use of the information provided by the existing systems, and taking necessary corrective action in bridging the gaps and removing the problems. It was also suggested that UNFF should participate in the ongoing initiative to streamline the national reporting requirements for the international environmental instruments.

Other participants noted that the existing national and international reporting and monitoring systems are either ineffective or inappropriate in assessing the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. Consequently, they proposed the establishment of innovative UNFF structures and procedures for reporting, monitoring and assessment, accepting implementation reports in a flexible and open manner from different sources. This approach proposed to draw on a variety of reporting formats, including verbal, written, statistical, video, and internet-based electronic submissions, etc. which would require flexible and agile mechanism to receive and review the implementation reports. The role of independent reporting and monitoring (e.g. the Global Forest Watch) was also recognised by some participants.

It was noted that the IFF agreed on two types of reporting and monitoring: (i) implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and (ii) criteria and indictors for monitoring the state of the forests. Most participants recommended that the reporting and monitoring be focussed on implementation and the assessment on identification of obstacles as well as successes and other lessons learned which would allow to make recommendations for improved implementation. Some participants noted the importance of multi-stakeholder processes for the development of country reports. The reporting and monitoring system could also allow the assessment of the implementation of the UNFF Plan of Action, and some participants proposed that the reporting and monitoring system should indeed focus on the monitoring of the UNFF Plan of Action instead of the 270 Proposals for Action as this would be more effective.

It was felt that the outcomes of the monitoring and assessment should be disseminated widely in an efficient manner which would require a specific dissemination and information strategy (see also function (b)). Monitoring and reporting should identify gaps and experiences as the basis for improving implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. The products of the monitoring and assessment exercises could be included within the communication strategy in order to share the information and to take advantage of the good experiences and lessons learned by others. A view was also presented that monitoring/assessment/reporting should not be on 'forestry' only but on cross-sectoral forest issues. This would give an added value to UNFF. A few participants expressed support to including impact on social and cultural aspects.

Examples for potential means through which the UNFF could perform this function were discussed, including:

- Reporting and monitoring system to be decided upon by the UNFF
- UNFF Monitoring and Assessment Committee
- An expert group to identify synergies and to streamline / rationalise reporting.
- Work of the UNFF Secretariat
- An *ad hoc* expert panel for assessing progress in implementation
- Multi-stakeholder dialogue at each UNFF session
- One day reserved for reporting, monitoring and assessment at each UNFF session
- Uniform CPF reporting format / questionnaire

- Independent monitoring
- NGO cooperation to assess progress and inputs e.g. to ad hoc expert panel.

The expected outcomes of the UNFF MYPOW under this function could include:

- UNFF reports on monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation
- Summary reports in easily accessible form for wide dissemination
- Reviews on the UNFF effectiveness and progress in the implementation of its MYPOW
- Input and feedback to other UNFF functions and its MYPOW, with identified priorities
- Recommendations to the high-level ministerial segment with identified priorities
- UNFF resolution to the high-level ministerial segment
- Draft resolutions to be submitted to ECOSOC and UN General Assembly
- Guidance to CPF
- Recommendations to countries
- Communication with other sectors
- Thematic reports on priority issues
- Streamlined monitoring/reporting process for forests.

2.4.6 Function (f) Strengthening Political Commitment

"Strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through: ministerial engagement; developing ways to liaise with governing bodies of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments; and the promotion of action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to forests;" (ECOSOC Resolution)

The expert consultation agreed on the need for strengthening political commitment at the same time emphasising that there is already quite good level of commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. It was pointed out that political commitment cannot be created in the absence of a common sense of urgency and broad consensus for action.

The role of the high-level ministerial segment was underlined by many in enforcing this function, pointing out that the high-level element must be correlated with building political commitment throughout the civil society. It was recommended by many participants that the high-level segment be carefully planned to achieve highest possible impact. This requires few carefully prepared thematic discussions on a small number of mature policy issues, focus being put on the implementation of existing commitments. A clear link with national level implementation is also likely to enhance the political interest of the deliberations of the segment. Demonstrating the broad scope social, cultural, economic and environmental values of forests, and respective recognition or valuation particularly of non-market benefits, could be one way of increasing the political leverage of the sector.

Some participants proposed that the high-level ministerial meetings would be organised two times over the five year period of the UNFF MYPOW, whereas others proposed annual meetings. The ministerial meetings could be short in duration and be organised in the framework of a more extended UNFF session. Some experts also recommended that meetings of the high-level ministerial segment could possibly be organised in the regions. There could be informal multi-stakeholder dialogue in connection with the high level segment to facilitate exchange of information.

Many participants stressed the need for UNFF to produce concrete results in order to achieve a strong commitment.

It was emphasised that the ministerial segments can be preceded by inter-ministerial coordination at national levels to expand the political impact of the meetings beyond the parent ministry. To this end, commitment to cross-sectoral approaches and the special role and importance of national financing institutions was highlighted.

As a way to strengthen political commitment, some experts underlined the decision of the ECOSOC regarding a legal framework on all types of forests. In this regard UNFF could, through an ad-hoc Expert Group, initiate the development of relevant parameters. Some underlined their view that this would contaminate the work of the UNFF.

Liaison with the governing bodies of international and regional organisations, institutions and instruments and the promotion of action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to

forests, as defined in the ECOSOC resolution, were also noted as important activities under this function. For example, the CSD presents an opportunity to UNFF/CPF to discuss forest issues. To this end Rio + 10 gives UNFF the possibility of addressing forests with other sectors.

The potential means through which the UNFF could perform this function were discussed, including:

- The high-level ministerial segment
- Involvement of major groups in implementation and reporting
- Inter-ministerial meetings at national and regional levels in preparation of the ministerial segment
- Meetings of UNFF in different geographic regions
- Meetings of CPF in different geographic regions
- Case studies on success stories
- Special meetings / sessions of the UNFF with the heads of CPF member institutions
- Special meetings / sessions of the UNFF with the private sector associations and executive officers of major companies and major groups
- Partnerships between ministries of the North/South – East/West.

The expected outcomes of the UNFF MYPOW under this function could include:

- Ministerial resolutions / declarations supporting the implementation of Proposals for Action through nfps
- Policy dialogue and decisions
- Resolution by UN General Assembly requesting CPF member to give increased attention to forests
- Agreement on implementation priorities at global level
- Ministerial declaration on the significance of nfps in LFCCs
- Institutionalisation of cross-sectoral ministerial discussions about forest-related issues.